343 Chicken house and pens. Every head of a compound has a
● 235 small straw hut for fowl within his establishment. There is also a
231 small round hut of clay for the sheep and goats.

Repair of houses. When an establishment is damaged by rain
356 or is in need of repair, the work is done by the residents (the head of the family and the dakompa, as well as the father's wives and brothers) with no help from outsiders. There is no pay beyond the usual meals. The head of the family merely says to the workers when the work has been completed: "N'fa nel toumtogo, imaou nian (thanks for the hard work, many thanks for the labor)."

[223] Chapter 14

Mossi Clothing

Dress of the Naba

241 In this chapter we shall examine the various modifications
554 and improvements in the dress of Mossi chiefs.
435 1. Before and during the first twenty years of the French occupation. (a) Zangoego pelga: a large robe made of narrow bands of cotton fabric, rather expertly woven. These robes, which are made and embroidered by specialists, used to cost from 70,000 to 100,000 cowries (1).

1. One hundred francs. The five-franc note is now worth 1,000 cowries. The silver five-franc piece was worth from 5,000 to 7,000 cowries, depending on the fluctuations of exchange.

(b) Karfo: a large robe, dark blue in color, made of the same material as the preceding (50,000 to 70,000 cowries).

(c) Noufa: a large robe and trousers, made of very fine fabric in a dark gray color. It had the value of two slaves or 70,000 cowries for the robe and 50,000 for the trousers.

221 rains come, laying aside any other task no matter what his profession
241 may be. The Mossi year is divided as described below, and year follows year without bringing any changes in this monotonous existence.

The rainy season from May to October is the time of the hard labor of cultivation, and all Mossi devote themselves fully to the task. Men, women, and children are always in the fields. They cut down the [805] thorn bushes at the beginning of May, as soon as the Pleiades appear on the horizon and the baobabs begin to burgeon. This is spring (sigu). For this work they use a small hatchet, a few centimeters wide, with a short, easily grasped handle, and a forked stick to fold back the thorny branches so they may more conveniently be cut at the base. The branches are piled in heaps and burned one evening as soon as they are dry. When the first copious rains fall, usually in June, the natives immediately sow the small white millet used to make sarabo, the staple of the aboriginal diet, and the large red millet or sorghum from which millet beer is made.

Sowing is regarded as one of the most laborious tasks, because it forces the sower to remain bent so as not to lose sight of the stretch already covered. The natives sow with an old worn-out hoe, with which they strike the ground twice in order to make a small hole. The grain is carried in a gourd held by a string to the left hand; this leaves the fingers free to seize a few grains which are dropped into the hole. A little soil is then replaced by the hoe. When the rain has soaked the ground more thoroughly and the millet has begun to grow, maize is sowed around the huts.

Following the first weeding of the fields, beans are sowed among the shoots of small millet, and cotton among those of large red millet or near the watercourses. The ground is then prepared to sow rice, peanuts, and native peas. Meanwhile the fields must be hoed incessantly to remove the weeds that would smother the young millet shoots. If the rain is too abundant at the end of June, the cultivators are often overwhelmed with work, and they complain that it has become impossible to keep their fields clean. Gombo (okra) and all the condiments for making sauce, peppers, tomatoes, etc., are planted around the maize fields, near the huts, along with /46/ native hemp and all sorts of gourd plants. In favorable soil, hence only in certain areas, fabirama, manioc, and yams are cultivated in a special manner.

221 Those who raise chicks take them along to the fields in an oblong
235 cage of plaited straw or willow. When they get to the spot where

221 they will be working, they open the door of the cage and the mother
235 hen comes out. She is tied to the basket with a string, and the chicks
run around her. If their master finds a good termite nest, he takes it to his little charges and breaks it in two. In the evening he puts the hen and chicks back into the basket and carries it home suspended from his shoulder.

[809] The heavy rains fall in July and August. This is summer (seoro).
221 Whenever the ground is not too soggy, everybody runs to the fields at
241 dawn and works until nightfall. One or two women stay home to pre-
476 pare food for the laborers, whose strength must be maintained for all this hard work. No one may rest. Only the sick and the helpless old people stay home, and even they are put to work, looking after the babies. This is the time when wealthy people call friends to their aid. The owner of a vast field has every member of the village notified — especially the young men, those who own some obligation toward him, those who have an eye on his daughters — that on a certain date he will be weeding his field, and at dawn of that day everyone gathers and labors while the drums spur them on. On another occasion, this man in turn will help those who have worked for him. This practice of mutual aid is very advantageous because a field overgrown with weeds is cleaned in a single day, but it becomes onerous when people must appeal to their neighbors several times in the course of a season.

221 The heavy rains stop in August or September, the maize is ripe,
241 and feasting begins. Roasted corn ears are a prized tidbit, especially
262 when the kernels are still tender. There is one kind of maize, faintly sweet, which when sautéed in butter recalls our garden peas. Everywhere the children and even the elders feast on maize; everywhere people offer a visitor a few ears of maize, which are often roasted on the spot. When the maize harvest is completed, maize gruel, which recalls the famous Italian polenta, advantageously replaces millet mush and brings a pleasant change to the daily fare, especially since gombo is ripening and adds variety to the sauce as well. Bellies fill out, faces glow with health, and as a very natural sequence, hearts are flooded with joy. The end of the dry season may have been difficult because millet was running low; the winter tasks may have been laborious; but now everyone makes up for it. The harvested maize is replaced in the fields by tobacco; its seedlings were prepared as the harvest drew near.

[805] At the end of September or beginning of October, the large red millet is ripe. This is autumn (houpéla). Maize is now too tough

231 We mentioned earlier the karyanga, which is gathered wild or cultivated for horses. It is given to them at the height of the winter season.

Many Mossi own dogs. They use them to guard the soukala, to hunt in the bush, or for consumption. In the latter case, the [262 438] animal is fattened. Dog meat was sold on Mossi markets in the old days, but the Yarsé, who are Moslems as we know, found it improper to exhibit dog meat alongside mutton or beef, and the custom was abandoned. Dogs are still killed inside the soukala, however, for consumption purposes.

[435] A dog is worth from 2 to 5 francs.

●235 The Mossi have chickens and guinea fowl. The chickens are worth 250 cowries. The eggs are not sold.

It is the men who care for the chickens. They /492/ look in the bush for termite nests which they break to pieces so that the chickens may eat the termites. Sometimes, instead of one ration only, the chickens are issued two a day, one in the morning and one in the evening.

The guinea fowl are less numerous than the chickens. Accord- [435 462] ing to their weight, they are worth from 250 to 300 cowries. Their eggs are eaten. It is the men who care for the guinea fowl as for the chickens.

231 The Mossi place beehives in the trees. The hives consist of elongated straw cylinders shaped like a tom-tom. One of the sides is completely closed, while the other is perforated to allow the bees to come and go.

231 237 These hives are placed in the trees at the time when the warm season begins (March), and then the honey is gathered every month except at the height of the rainy season, when the downpours are too heavy. The children are in charge of this. They climb the tree with a straw torch on fire, and frighten the bees away. Then they take the honey and come down. In order to separate the honey from the wax, the honeycombs are placed in a large canari full of water. Another canari is heated intensely, and its burning-hot base is brought close to the surface of the jar where the combs are floating. The wax melts and sinks to the bottom, while the honey floats. The wax is sold to jewelers, who use it in the [306] manufacture of copper objects made by the lost-wax process. It is